



Washburn County Purple Loosestrife Beetle Program

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Washburn County, located in Northwestern Wisconsin, is home to 964 lakes (3rd highest in State) and 662 miles of streams. Thousands of water enthusiasts visit the county each year, helping drive the local economy. However, with the high amount of tourism, comes more concern of spreading aquatic invasive species (AIS). Purple Loosestrife is of major concern in the county which led to a biological control program in 2007.

The biological control program uses *Galerucella* beetles to feed on stands of purple loosestrife. Young emerging larvae feed on shoot tips (apical meristems) of the loosestrife plant, stunting its growth. Older larvae can cause 100% defoliation of leaf and stem tissues, causing severe plant stress. Large numbers of newly emerged adults cause further defoliation. These beetles do not overwinter in your window sills!

Steps for Raising Purple Loosestrife Beetles:

1. Dig and plant rootstock
2. Set up rearing pools, cover plants with netting (predator control)
3. Collect beetles to mate and lay eggs inside nets
4. New larvae hatch and new beetles grow
5. Release beetles into infested areas (along shorelines, wetlands, etc.)



Larvae feeding on stem



Adult Beetle



Purple Loosestrife growing along the Yellow River



Contact your local county AIS Coordinator if you're interested in raising beetles to place along your infested shoreline. They will help provide rootstock, beetles and equipment.

Purple Loosestrife Identification:

- Perennial, 3-9 feet tall
- 5-6 petals per flower
- Semi-woody square stem
- Opposite leaves
- Blooms June-Sept
- Produces 2-3 million seeds annually
- Moist to shallow water sites



These areas on the Yellow River were once infested with hundreds of purple loosestrife plants. After several years of treatment with beetles, the areas are beginning to naturally restore.